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## LABOR ABSENTEEISM

*Significance of labor absenteeism and relation to labor mobility.*<sup>1</sup>—Labor absenteeism is here understood to mean the more or less involuntary absence of employees from work for reasons which may be considered unavoidable on the part of the employee. While absenteeism is not labor mobility, it does have an important bearing on the extent of labor shifting because the absent employee of today is quite likely to become a factor in the labor mobility of tomorrow. Labor absenteeism, however, bears an important relation to labor instability as may be gathered from a typical expression of the employment manager of a large plant. He writes:

This question of absenteeism has not been given sufficient consideration in its relation to labor turnover. Usually the first symptoms of that condition of mind in the employee, which results in quitting, are carelessness and indifference in regard to his or her work. These initial symptoms may escape detection, but the next logical stage of the disease, usually evidenced after the weekly day of rest, is "absenteeism." This should at once be made a subject of investigation and record.

Reluctance to resume or remain at work may be due to causes inherent in the individual, but may also result from unsatisfactory conditions which affect the personnel of a whole department or a whole organization. In the first case, means may be found to salvage the individual to the organization—perhaps by the removal of misunderstandings, by transfer, or by other means and his or her surroundings. In the second case, the investigation of one or two cases of "absenteeism" may lead to the discovery and correction of conditions in the department or organization, which are causing dissatisfaction, unrest, and consequent labor turnover.

Absenteeism may be the first tangible symptom of a disease either in the individual or in the organization, and as such should not be neglected. Labor unrest, like other diseases, can be best overcome if attacked at the appearance of the first symptoms. If the conditions which such symptoms indicate are neglected, the disease will quickly spread until a whole organization is affected.

<sup>1</sup> Labor mobility is here interpreted to be the movement of labor into and out of industrial establishments. For a comprehensive survey of this subject see "Mobility of Labor in American Industry," by Paul F. Brissenden and Emil Frankel, *Monthly Labor Review*, June, 1920, and "The Mobility of Industrial Labor," by the same authors, in the December, 1920, issue of the *Political Science Quarterly*.

In order to devise means which will bring about a lessening of absenteeism, and guarantee continuous and efficient operation, it is necessary to record the behavior of the working force in regard to absenteeism. Such records will be effective and valuable supplements to the labor mobility records of the plant forces.

Until recently, only a relatively small number of establishments have tried to keep records of their absentees. When such records are kept, it has been customary to work out from them what are called "percentages of absenteeism." Even the most cursory examination of this so-called percentage of absenteeism will show that it is arrived at by no single and consistent method. For this reason, such figures do not readily lend themselves to a comparison of the comparative extent of absenteeism among different establishments or industries. The percentage of absenteeism is generally arrived at by finding out the numerical relation of the number of workers absent to the total number of workers on the pay-roll. On account of the many different ways in which individual establishments keep their pay-roll records, and in view of their very divergent practices defining the circumstances in which a worker becomes an absentee, this method cannot be considered wholly satisfactory. The pay-roll figures generally are inflated because the pay-roll contains the names of employees who have actually left the service without giving any notice and are considered by the establishment to be active employees temporarily absent from work. The amount of this inflation in the pay-roll will depend upon how soon an establishment finds out when an employee has quit and how soon his name is removed from the pay-roll. If the pay-roll is frequently cleared of the "dead timber," the extent of absenteeism will appear to be considerably less than in establishments which keep the names of employees on the pay-roll for longer periods.

*Definition and Measurement of labor absenteeism.*<sup>1</sup>—In view of the foregoing, it is apparent that just as in dealing with labor mobility, any clear presentation of the relative extent of absen-

<sup>1</sup> In this connection see a very suggestive study on "The Measurement of Labor Mobility," by Paul F. Brissenden, which appeared in the *Journal of Political Economy*, June, 1920.

teeism in different establishments or different industries makes absolutely necessary a uniform use of terms and a uniform standard of measurement. In measuring absenteeism, it is necessary to distinguish between the absenteeism of active employees and the absenteeism of what might be called "inactive" employees. Active employees are those who are, and intend to remain, in the company's services, although temporarily absent because of their own sickness, or the sickness of other members of the family, occupational injuries, death in the home, private business, and so forth. The absenteeism of "inactive" employees is really not absenteeism at all, but potential separation from service. It is the voluntary absence of employees from work whom the employer considers still to be active employees but who have actually quit the employ of the concern. In measuring the extent of absenteeism it is obvious then that account should be taken only of the absenteeism of active employees as here understood.

The absenteeism of "inactive employees" will, as has already been explained, sooner or later become a factor in the separations from service and will appear in the employment records. It may be desirable, however, to record the number of absent employees who have quit without giving any notice, and establish the ratio between the number of "quits without notice" and the total number of separations. It is obvious, therefore, that any concern which desires to have an accurate measure of the extent of its absenteeism must have some follow-up system for absentees which will make it possible, easily and quickly, to distinguish between the unavoidable absence of active employees and the "absence" of inactive employees, that is, employees whose names are carried on the pay-roll but have actually quit the employ of the firm.

The requirements of accuracy and uniformity set forth above would seem to be quite well fulfilled in the following suggested method of determining the extent of absenteeism. The extent of absenteeism is statistically determined (a) in regard to the number of persons involved in absenteeism by comparing the *number of active employees* absent, during any given period, with the number of labor hours put in by the work force during that period; and (b) in regard to the number of labor hours lost through absenteeism

by comparing the *total labor hours lost* through the absence of active employees, during any given period, with the number of labor hours put in by the work force during that period.

*Extent of absenteeism.*—It is only in the last few years that any appreciable attention has been paid to the problem of absenteeism in labor. Even in the few plants which have compiled such data, the records are not in such shape as to permit the presentation of statistics of absenteeism in the manner suggested above. In view of the paucity of the available information it becomes necessary to make use of such fragmentary data as most closely approximate the standard outlined above. The figures presented here are taken exclusively from firms which have made definite efforts to assure themselves that the absentee time recorded is that of active employees and not that of employees who have really left the company's service. These firms, moreover, after ascertaining whether the absence is that of the active or "inactive" employee, immediately clear the pay-roll of the "inactive" employee or separated employees.

In Table I is given the absentee record of a large automobile-manufacturing establishment.<sup>1</sup>

These figures indicate that the amount of absenteeism in this plant, during the three-year period covered in the table, ranged from a maximum of 7.6 per cent in November, 1918, to a minimum of 2.1 per cent in the month immediately following. A glance at the percentage figures in the next to the last column shows that labor absenteeism in this plant at any rate, is a phenomenon of much less widely fluctuating character from month to month than labor mobility. The rate figures in the last column are inserted merely to show, side by side, the trends in mobility and absenteeism. Being computed on entirely different bases, it is, of course, impossible to compare the two sets of figures in any way except as to general trend. There appears to be some definite correlation between the trend of mobility and that of absenteeism. Although there is very little apparent tendency on the part of absenteeism to vary with the seasons of the year, yet the month of April seems

<sup>1</sup> This and the following tables are from unpublished material in the files of the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics.

TABLE I  
ABSENTEEISM IN AN AUTOMOBILE MANUFACTURING ESTABLISHMENT,  
MAY, 1916—APRIL, 1919

YEAR AND MONTH	AVERAGE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES ON PAY-ROLL	ABSENTEES		LABOR FLUX PER 10,000 LABOR HOURS†
		Number	Percentage*	
1916				
May.....	31,294	1,962	6.3	4.6
June.....	32,898	1,820	5.5	4.3
July.....	34,231	2,412	7.1	2.4
August.....	34,012	2,443	7.2	1.9
September.....	35,545	1,806	5.1	4.7
October.....	38,490	1,849	4.8	5.3
November.....	40,439	2,055	5.1	1.5
December.....	40,712	1,958	4.9	1.0
Average.....	35,954	2,038	5.7	6.3
1917				
January.....	40,189	2,005	5.0	1.3
February.....	41,189	2,344	5.7	1.2
March.....	40,833	2,227	5.5	1.2
April.....	36,726	2,338	6.4	2.7
May.....	38,373	1,677	4.4	3.0
June.....	36,923	1,505	4.1	2.5
July.....	36,148	1,647	4.6	1.7
August.....	35,886	2,571	7.2	2.9
September.....	35,445	1,893	5.3	2.5
October.....	35,461	1,325	3.7	3.0
November.....	35,124	1,087	3.1	2.0
December.....	34,370	1,235	3.6	1.4
Average.....	37,223	1,821	4.9	2.1
1918				
January.....	34,040	1,621	4.8	1.2
February.....	33,873	1,230	3.6	1.2
March.....	33,448	1,293	3.9	2.2
April.....	33,318	2,117	6.4	4.3
May.....	33,534	1,347	4.0	5.8
June.....	33,118	1,039	3.2	6.2
July.....	32,701	2,402	7.3	3.1
August.....	32,074	1,306	4.1	7.2
September.....	33,317	1,450	4.4	6.0
October.....	35,503	1,005	5.4	7.5
November.....	37,518	2,841	7.6	5.5
December.....	36,865	7,830	2.1	3.8
Average.....	34,109	2,198	6.4	4.6

\* Computed by dividing the number of absentees by the average number on the pay-roll.

† Labor flux is here considered to be the total movement of labor in and out (accessions and separations). The labor flux is arrived at by dividing the labor-change-numbers (total of accessions and separations) by the total number of labor hours put in by the work force during specified periods, and multiplying by 10,000. For a detailed description regarding this method of measuring labor mobility, see, "The Measurement of Labor Mobility" by Paul F. Brissenden, *Journal of Political Economy*, June, 1920, "Mobility of Labor in American Industry" by Paul F. Brissenden and Emil Frankel, *Monthly Labor Review*, June, 1920, and "The Mobility of Industrial Labor" by the same authors, *Political Science Quarterly*, December, 1920.

TABLE I—Continued

YEAR AND MONTH	AVERAGE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES ON PAY-ROLL	ABSENTEES		LABOR FLUX PER 10,000 LABOR HOURS
		Number	Percentage	
1919				
January.....	36,845	2,666	7.2	2.3
February.....	36,812	2,176	5.9	2.0
March.....	37,067	2,629	6.9	5.8
April.....	41,001	2,734	6.7	9.1
Average.....	38,156	2,551	6.7	5.0

to be a month of extensive absenteeism, as it is a month of heavy labor shifting. The highest absentee percentages seem usually to fall in the summer months, August appearing to be the worst month of all. A plausible explanation for this is, obviously, the hot weather.

Table II shows the proportion of absent employees to those carried on the pay-roll in a large car-manufacturing establishment.

TABLE II

ABSENTEEISM IN A CAR-BUILDING PLANT, YEAR ENDING MAY 31, 1918

YEAR AND MONTH	AVERAGE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES ON PAY-ROLL	ABSENTEES	
		Number	Percentage
1917			
June.....	8,646	790	9.1
July.....	8,693	789	9.1
August.....	8,813	974	11.1
September.....	8,457	865	10.2
October.....	8,195	722	8.8
November.....	8,355	707	8.5
December.....	8,419	845	10.0
1918			
January.....	8,289	1,500	18.1
February.....	7,782	717	9.2
March.....	7,597	649	8.6
April.....	7,315	724	9.9
May.....	6,783	696	10.3
Year.....	8,103	816	10.1

The percentage of absentees for the first two months is slightly below the average for the year. The increase in August and

September is due to hot-weather conditions. During October and November the average daily attendance was more favorable, but less so in December. The lowest attendance record was reached in January, 1918. The unusually large number of absentees in January was caused by the observance of heatless days during that month, and also the very severe snowstorms, which greatly demoralized transportation conditions and prevented employees from coming to work.

The experience of a large tool-manufacturing establishment with absentees, in their day and night forces, is given in Table III.<sup>1</sup>

TABLE III  
ABSENTEEISM IN A MACHINE-TOOL MANUFACTURING ESTABLISHMENT, OF  
DAY AND NIGHT FORCES\*

MONTH	Day Force				Night Force			
	1916	1917	1918	1919	1916	1917	1918	1919
January.....	2.8	5.0	7.4	4.5	7.5	10.1	17.0	4.0
February.....	3.4	7.2	7.1	5.6	8.4	12.0	14.0	6.8
March.....	2.9	6.3	8.2	6.1	8.4	11.8	12.7	5.8
April.....	3.5	6.1	7.3	4.2	8.5	12.3	12.7	4.5
May.....	4.6	6.4	5.3	1.9	9.6	8.7	11.6	3.7
June.....	2.9	7.1	6.1	2.1	8.4	11.0	10.0	3.1
July.....	4.3	6.8	6.9	2.1	13.6	13.0	10.7	3.7
August.....	4.3	8.5	6.2	2.5	8.0	14.0	12.8	4.6
September.....	2.8	6.8	5.1	1.9	8.3	10.8	11.0	5.9
October.....	2.7	5.1	6.7	2.6	8.1	11.2	14.0	4.7
November.....	3.5	5.8	6.9	3.1	8.8	11.6	7.8	6.1
December.....	2.7	5.3	7.9	3.2	5.9	7.7	10.6	3.4
Total.....	3.3	6.3	6.8	3.3	8.5	11.1	12.1	4.7

\* Percentage average daily number absent of average daily number at work

This table shows wide fluctuations in the monthly extent of absenteeism in both the day and the night force. The reason

<sup>1</sup> This plant considers those employees as absentees whose names are carried on the active-work-force list and who are not at work when the daily force report is made up, one hour after the beginning of the work period. The names of sick and injured employees are included among the absentees. The cause of absences of employees is determined through inquiry among fellow-workers and by home visitation. If it is believed that they have definitely left the employ of the company, their names are taken off the force list. Absent employees about whom no information can be obtained are carried on the force list for ten days, after which period their names are dropped from the roll.

advanced by the company for the higher percentage of absenteeism in the night force is the fact that workmen generally dislike night

TABLE IV

ABSENTEEISM IN SPECIFIED OCCUPATIONS IN A CAR-BUILDING PLANT, YEAR ENDING  
MAY 31, 1918

OCCUPATION	AVERAGE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES ON PAY-ROLL	ABSENTEES	
		Number	Percentage
Air-brake construction men . . . . .	9	1	11.1
Assemblers, filers, and welders . . . . .	225	28	12.4
Bevelers, glaziers, and silverers . . . . .	25	2	8.0
Blacksmiths . . . . .	128	11	8.6
Bolt makers . . . . .	46	6	13.0
Bookkeepers, clerks, etc. . . . .	243	14	5.8
Cabinet-makers . . . . .	182	15	8.2
Car-body builders . . . . .	1,021	150	14.7
Car-bottom builders . . . . .	114	11	9.6
Car-electricians . . . . .	211	25	11.8
Car-inspectors . . . . .	26	1	3.8
Carpenters . . . . .	77	5	6.5
Car-platform builders . . . . .	33	2	6.1
Car steam fitters . . . . .	131	13	9.9
Car truck builders . . . . .	170	15	8.8
Die and tool makers . . . . .	168	10	6.0
Draftsmen . . . . .	96	8	8.3
Engineers and firemen . . . . .	63	4	6.3
Hammersmiths . . . . .	124	14	11.3
Inside-car finishers . . . . .	305	44	14.4
Inside-car trimmers . . . . .	239	20	11.7
Laborers . . . . .	1,250	110	8.8
Machinists, bench machinists, etc. . . . .	505	39	7.7
Mechanical engineers . . . . .	27	1	3.7
Millwrights . . . . .	157	11	7.1
Molders . . . . .	52	3	5.8
Painters . . . . .	580	63	10.9
Pattern-makers . . . . .	20	2	10.0
Printers . . . . .	9		
Riveters . . . . .	163	24	14.7
Rollers (contractors) . . . . .	4		
Rolling-mill helpers . . . . .	99	9	9.1
Roof fitters . . . . .	203	24	11.8
Shearsmen, punch-press operators, etc. . . . .	498	52	10.4
Shop electricians . . . . .	62	5	8.1
Shop steam and water fitters . . . . .	49	2	4.1
Superintendents, general foremen, etc. . . . .	75	4	5.3
Template makers . . . . .	40	3	7.5
Tinners . . . . .	163	11	6.7
Upholsterers . . . . .	245	22	9.0
Watchmen . . . . .	96	7	7.3
Wood-machine operators . . . . .	170	17	10.0
Total . . . . .	8,103	816	10.1

work and that for that reason there is a greater tendency among them to lay off and look for other jobs, finally dropping out of the organization without having given any previous notice. The high ratios of absenteeism of both the day and night force in 1917 and 1918 the management believes to be due to an influx into the plant of an unsatisfactory type of worker whose tendency is to lay off a great deal and usually to quit without notice.

Attention should be called to the fact that labor absenteeism rates, shown for a given year or for an industry group as a whole, may fail to reveal the existence of a very considerable variation in the amount of absenteeism within the divisions named, and that further classification was necessary to reveal the real significance of the situation. This applies particularly to the absenteeism of individual establishments, for the reason that the absenteeism may be confined to a relatively small number of occupations within the work force.

Table IV shows the occupational distribution of absenteeism among the employees of a large car-building establishment.

This table reveals how greatly the absentee percentages of the various occupations differ from those shown for the establishment as a whole. It is seen that in some occupations the number of absentees was quite negligible while in others nearly one-sixth of the average daily force on the pay-roll stayed away from work. In five of the forty-two occupations listed the ratio of the average daily number absent to the average daily number on the pay-roll is less than 5 per cent; in twenty-five occupations the ratio is from 5 to 10 per cent; and in twelve occupations it is from 10 to 15 per cent.

The ratios shown in Table IV give no indication of the short-time fluctuations in absenteeism and how greatly industrial or climatic conditions may affect the extent of absenteeism. Such figures are given in Table V, which shows the monthly percentage of absentees for some of the more important occupations for the same car-building establishment from which the figures for Table IV were obtained.

The fact that strikes the eye at once in this table is the very wide fluctuation from month to month in nearly every occupation

listed. These fluctuations are especially marked in the case of car-body builders, inside-car finishers, inside-car trimmers, and roofers. With very few exceptions nearly all occupations show a decided increase in the percentage of absenteeism during the month

TABLE V

ABSENTEEISM FOR EACH MONTH IN SPECIFIED OCCUPATIONS IN A CAR-BUILDING PLANT, YEAR ENDING MAY 31, 1918

OCCUPATION	PERCENTAGE AVERAGE DAILY NUMBER ABSENT OF AVERAGE DAILY NUMBER ON PAY-ROLL, FOR													
	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Year	
Assemblers, filers, and welders. . . .	11.2	11.0	19.2	12.9	11.2	9.7	7.5	12.4	8.9	10.7	20.0	7.7	12.4	
Blacksmiths. . . . .	6.1	9.0	11.2	8.9	5.9	7.5	12.4	12.6	7.3	8.5	8.5	11.0	8.6	
Bookkeepers, clerks, etc. . . . .	5.3	6.5	7.4	5.9	5.4	4.1	4.5	4.4	4.1	6.6	5.4	7.6	5.8	
Cabinet-makers. . . .	4.4	5.7	8.9	10.7	8.1	6.4	8.3	13.5	9.9	6.1	11.7	7.4	8.2	
Car-body builders.	23.0	11.3	14.8	10.0	13.6	12.9	13.3	23.3	10.6	11.2	13.3	15.0	14.7	
Car-bottom build- ers. . . . .	5.5	9.9	14.1	12.5	4.1	8.0	9.5	19.3	10.0	6.1	6.0	13.1	9.6	
Car electricians. . . .	8.5	10.9	13.3	11.4	9.1	9.1	10.7	21.4	14.1	12.7	10.5	9.6	11.8	
Car steam fitters. . .	8.5	7.9	10.4	10.9	9.4	8.4	9.5	17.9	10.6	9.1	10.2	8.7	9.9	
Car truck builders.	9.6	9.1	9.6	9.9	6.5	6.8	8.8	5.5	7.0	6.2	7.0	10.4	8.8	
Die and tool mak- ers. . . . .	7.9	8.5	8.4	7.0	5.9	5.7	5.2	4.5	4.1	3.7	6.1	4.4	6.0	
Hammersmiths. . . .	10.0	8.4	12.2	7.7	8.3	10.6	15.7	18.3	8.9	9.0	8.7	11.0	11.3	
Inside-car finishers	6.7	7.1	10.2	16.0	16.9	14.5	11.9	27.4	26.2	13.3	14.0	12.9	14.4	
Inside-car trim- mers. . . . .	7.6	6.6	11.0	10.7	13.2	5.7	8.7	24.2	12.6	22.9	7.8	9.3	11.7	
Laborers. . . . .	6.5	7.0	7.2	7.9	6.5	7.9	10.1	15.0	7.7	8.7	10.9	9.8	8.8	
Machinists, bench machinists, etc.. . .	6.1	7.4	8.7	7.8	7.8	6.1	6.6	10.2	6.4	6.9	8.2	9.7	7.7	
Millwrights. . . . .	5.2	6.1	7.3	7.2	7.2	7.1	8.3	9.7	7.9	5.7	7.6	7.0	7.1	
Painters. . . . .	9.4	8.1	10.2	11.3	9.6	8.4	10.3	22.8	10.6	7.7	10.2	8.3	10.9	
Riveters. . . . .	17.0	13.4	16.4	16.9	12.7	12.2	13.5	11.9	14.6	13.7	10.4	16.3	14.7	
Roof fitters. . . . .	6.1	14.4	16.8	12.2	7.4	15.2	12.4	14.9	10.1	7.9	9.6	15.0	11.8	
Shearsmen, punch- press operators, etc. . . . .	6.7	8.7	12.4	10.2	6.4	9.3	13.2	15.3	8.5	9.8	13.1	12.5	10.4	
Tinners. . . . .	3.9	3.8	4.2	6.6	7.8	5.8	6.4	12.0	8.2	6.5	8.8	7.2	6.7	
Upholsterers. . . . .	6.4	6.7	12.5	9.9	7.0	5.4	5.7	17.0	17.3	7.2	8.2	6.4	9.0	
Wood-machine operators. . . . .	11.3	6.9	7.3	8.6	7.5	8.9	5.6	13.7	6.4	9.6	16.0	11.6	10.0	

of January, 1918. This was due, as has already been explained, to the demoralized transportation conditions resulting from severe snowstorms of several days' duration.

*Reduction of absenteeism.*—The elimination of avoidable absence from work has received a great deal of attention during recent

months. During the war period, when absenteeism in labor became an especially acute problem, careful and extensive inquiries were made concerning it by the Division of Labor Administration of the Working Conditions Service of the United States Department of Labor. As a result of it, a plan for the investigation and reduction of absenteeism was outlined in some detail. This plan, which was submitted to a large number of plants, was generally approved by them and thought to be a thoroughly workable one. The salient parts of it are reproduced herewith.

The method of investigation of absences must depend on the size of the plant and its departments and the purposes and policies of the employer. It is safe, however, to caution against overelaboration. Every effort should be made to have the foremen gather and supply reasons for absences. Fellow-employees should be used as much as possible in calling in a neighborly way on absentees, to find out reasons for absences, and if the company can help in any way. This stimulates sympathetic fellow-feeling among employees and removes the objection of overinquisitiveness and paternalism on the part of the employer. Wherever possible, fellow-members of mutual aid societies should also be used. Employees should be stimulated to report in advance any contemplated absences on their part. They should be told also to telephone in on the day of the absence or send word by some fellow-employee, if they are detained by unforeseen circumstances. All of this simplifies the machinery of investigating absences; and, indeed, the ultimate purpose should be to have all absences handled in this simple and informal way.

A formal system of investigation and home visiting may, however, be necessary in many plants. If investigations are made, the first thing to decide is the time when they should be made. This may be: (1) immediately on first day of absence, (2) after a lapse of two or three days or a week, (3) on special request by foreman or other official, (4) upon the return of the absentee. In the first plan the purpose is to supply the same day to the foreman or employing officer all discoverable reasons for absences. This information is essential in order that these officials may have the proper attitude toward the absentee when he returns to work. It will

prevent foremen from greeting a man harshly who has suffered some family misfortune. Such a plan, however, would require a home visitor or a corps of visitors. By investigating only after several days' absence, or by special request, the number of visitors can be reduced.

A rather important question is, Who shall do the investigating work? Quite commonly a visiting nurse is employed for this purpose and sometimes a plant doctor. This is done for two reasons: first, it is the intention to combine the giving of medical aid and advice and other assistance with the investigation work, and secondly, where employees may resent inquisitiveness on the part of the employer, it is thought they would not object to a nurse who comes to help if she is needed. It is well to consider this matter of who shall do the home visiting, most carefully. If workmen are resentful at what they consider the employer's officious or paternalistic efforts to intrude into their homes, this resentment is turned against the nurse and militates against her usefulness in her professional capacity. A recent report of the United States Public Health Service advises against using plant nurses to follow up ordinary absences, and a better plan seems to be to hold plant nurses and doctors in reserve for those cases only where an investigator reports their services are needed in the homes. If investigation is carefully done by persons of tact and experience who also have some knowledge of the customs and languages of the employees then there is no need to disguise it as a nursing service. In general it has been found that women make more tactful and sympathetic home visitors, and they command more respect. They should be the kind of persons, also, who can advise generally on problems in the home and assist people who are in trouble.

Careful keeping of attendance records, the investigation, and home visiting all tend to discourage absenteeism. In addition to this, rewards for good attendance may be used with excellent effect if the rewards are granted first on the assumption that the conditions are being met, and then reduced in proportion to the failure to meet prescribed conditions. Instead of having a special bonus which would be denied to those who failed to have a perfect attendance, the reward should be a general addition to earnings from which deductions are made for every absence. The employee

will count on this additional amount as a real asset and plan disposition of it. He will not want to see it diminished, and if he is forced to be absent one day he will continue solicitous of the balance still available and try to keep the absence as short as possible.

Some employers have used fines and "docking" in excess of time lost to reduce absences. This practice would be found illegal if the employee were in a position to take it to court, as he is entitled to all he has earned. It has the effect of increasing rather than reducing absences, although it does tend to decrease tardiness. The same objection operates against forfeiture of special-attendance bonuses which require perfect attendance. The effect is to extend the absence beyond the initial day. Then, too, there is the evil effect of disappointment in breaking down the desire to qualify. This often, especially among young people, reacts into a despondency prolonging an absence beyond what its length otherwise would be. Rewards withheld until certain conditions are met are less effective than those granted on the assumption of their conditions being met and then being reduced in proportion to the failure to meet the prescribed conditions.

"Quits without notice" are often discovered through visitation. The absentee is found to be working elsewhere, or is in the process of quitting without notice, looking for another job. To clear the rolls of this dead timber employers set up a duration of absence beyond which an unaccounted-for employee shall be considered as a "quit without notice." These days of grace must be less than the number of days' holdback in pay. Unless this is so, employees can stop work enough days before pay day to escape being killed on the roll and return on pay day to draw all the money due them in the same manner as employees active on the rolls. Here the absentee work can effectively assist in getting termination interviews from "quits without notice." These interviews would come naturally in the course of the investigation of the absence, and they would not only reveal the causes for quitting, but they would also establish promptly that the employee was not an absentee but a quit.

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